

WELLNESS WORKS!



The Wellness At Work Program

Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Fall 2002

Our First Edition

The Wellness at Work newsletter has been named **Wellness Works!** Congratulations to the Monson Fire Department for the winning entry. Management Health Corporation generously donated a Stairmaster for the winner. The Wellness at Work program would like to thank all wellness communities that submitted an entry.

Wellness Works! will be profiling police and fire department wellness programs across the state and across the country so you can keep abreast of exciting new concepts in protective service employee wellness. **Wellness Works!** will also keep you up-to-date on the latest information from the Wellness At Work program. If you are interested in having your department's wellness program included in an issue of *Wellness Works!* please contact us.

WELLNESS AT WORK: IN MASSACHUSETTS

Barnstable County Department of Health and the Environment

Contact: Rita Mitchell RN, 508-375-6617

The Barnstable County Wellness Program was developed and implemented in November 1999. Rita Mitchell, R.N. has been the Wellness Coordinator since the program's inception. The annual \$80,000 wellness budget covers the cost of staffing and fitness supplies. This wellness program is available to employees and their families in fifteen Cape Cod towns and offers a series of seminars on topics including Physical Fitness, Nutrition, Stress Management, and Back Safety. In addition, tuberculosis testing, an immunization program offering hepatitis B, tetanus/diphtheria, pneumonia, and flu vaccines screenings are



Photo (from left) Jason Brickman, Management Health Corp., Joe Doherty, Wellness At Work Program Coordinator, Sondra Nealon, Wellness At Work Director, James Royce, Monson Fire Department, and Paul Kearney, Management Health Corp.

performed at health fairs throughout the year and are offered free of charge to all police and fire personnel. Rescreening demonstrated that many employees who participated in wellness programs successfully decreased their total cholesterol, decreased their body fat composition, and experienced overall weight loss. Police and fire departments have developed a strong rapport with the wellness program at the Department of Health and Environment. Rita Mitchell feels that meeting with union representatives and Department of Health and Environment staff to introduce programs, answer questions and identify specific needs was key to helping communities initiating wellness programs.

Danvers Police Department

Contact: Capt. Stuart Chase, 978-774-1213

The Town of Danvers offers their wellness program to all town employees. The annual budget is \$1,000. Wellness activities include health fairs, health and

fitness classes, an eight-week on-site Weight Watchers program and partial reimbursement for health club membership. In addition, the police department receives hepatitis B and flu inoculations, health education brochures and wellness program updates.

Local businesses have donated money for the police officers union to set-up a fitness room. Captain Stuart, wellness program coordinator, believes that union involvement greatly increased employee participation in the program.

East Longmeadow Fire Department

Contact: Lt. Frank Falcone, 413-525-5430

The Longmeadow Fire Department wellness program is open to all employees. They are allowed to train for two hours on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday while on duty. The Town of Longmeadow has provided a fully furnished fitness center for their fire and police departments. Firefighters are permitted to use the fitness center or the high school track, while on duty. The fitness center is available 24 hours a day for use by both career and call firefighters. The program is self-paced, and firefighters train at their own level.

Lt. Falcone, the wellness coordinator believes that having flexible training hours has greatly contributed to the success of their wellness program. It also makes physical training part of the everyday job.

Although initially skeptical, most firefighters have come to enjoy their wellness program. By allowing employees to be involved in the design and development of wellness activities, they have developed a sense of ownership in the program. They understand that their job is extremely physical and that training is an important part of their work duties. Lt. Frank Falcone has no dedicated budget for this program. Maintenance of the center is covered under the department's budget.

WELLNESS AT WORK: IN THE U.S.

Austin, Texas Police Department

Contact: Esther Weekes, EdD, 512-974-5085

The Wellness Coordinator for the Austin Police Department, Esther Weeks, provides all employees with fitness evaluations, medical physicals, exercise prescriptions, cholesterol screenings, personal

training and health education classes. In addition a physician is on staff to treat minor illnesses and worker's compensation injuries, supply information for medical referrals, and administer vaccines. This on-site physician enables the wellness program to offer a broad range of health services to employees. The Austin Police Department has an operating budget of \$300,000 annually for their wellness program.

The wellness program is offered to both officers and civilian employees, and participation in the program is voluntary. The Austin Police Department advises communities initiating a wellness program to conduct a needs assessment/employee interest survey. Ms. Weekes states "This will clearly define your department's interest in wellness activities, and it will motivate employees to become involved in the wellness program. However, be sure to implement follow-up programs and evaluations to any assessments or education seminars."

Did you know?

42% of adults in Massachusetts are overweight.

300,000 deaths each year in the United States are associated with obesity.

Overweight and obesity are associated with heart disease, certain types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, stroke, arthritis, breathing problems, and psychological disorders, such as depression.

The economic cost of obesity in the United States was about \$117 billion in 2000.

Visit our New Web site

www.state.ma.us/dph/bfch/chp/nutphys/wellness.htm

We want to hear from you! Tell us what you think of Wellness Works! and what type of information you would like to see.

For more information on the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Wellness At Work Program contact:

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